

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2015

Lt. Gen. Michelle D. Johnson
Superintendent
United States Air Force Academy
2304 Cadet Drive
U.S. Air Force Academy, CO 80840-5016

Dear Lieutenant General Johnson:

We are writing regarding your informal inquiry into a third-party complaint concerning members of the football team voluntarily kneeling in prayer at their games. We would like to express our strong continued support for the constitutionally-held rights to religious expression for all Americans, including Air Force cadets and other members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

As you know, public religious expression has historically been an essential pillar of our country's freedom and strength, ever since our Founding Fathers fought to secure these freedoms. The First Amendment ensures both that the government does not show preference to a certain religion, and that the government does not take away an individual's ability to exercise religion, including in public view.

All American citizens, including those who commit their lives to defending us and our way of life, are bestowed with these rights to religious freedom and expression. These rights should be upheld without discrimination. Air Force Academy cadets maintain the same free exercise rights as all Americans, and thus have the right to publically and voluntarily express their religious beliefs on the athletic field or anywhere else.

We appreciate how the Air Force has recently worked with Congress to prioritize protections for free exercise of religion, including responding to recent National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provisions which helped clarify and strengthen religious freedom protections for servicemen and women.

Since its inception, the Air Force Academy has done a truly remarkable job producing our nation's future leaders. The Air Force Academy's commitment to religious tolerance remains of utmost importance, given that these leaders come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to preserve the Constitutional rights of the brave men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting our cherished freedoms. We trust that this complaint will be dealt with expeditiously and that in no way will the Air Force Academy cadets have their First Amendment rights infringed.

Sincerely,



DOUG LAMBORN
Member of Congress



RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress



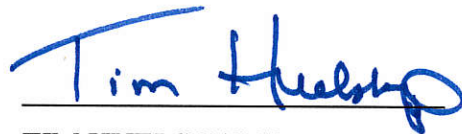
VICKY HARTZLER
Member of Congress



JOHN FLEMING, M.D.
Member of Congress



TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress



TIM HUELSKAMP
Member of Congress